Imagining Belonging: Initial Community Art Mapping of Place and the Legacy of 1970s Public Housing in Loughlinstown Courts

January - April 2025

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Illustration: 1980s Loughlinstown Community VHS Video Cover. Author: Unknown

Mapping Group

For Loughlinstown Estate Management
Gina Hogan, Denis Murray and Lilia Bobrov
(Loughlinstown Estate Management)

For Blue Drum
Ed Carroll (Community artist)
Carmel Ennis (Landscape artist)
Josiah Bhanghoyer / Adriana Mico Avomo, [Dún Laoghaire Further Education Institute placement students]
Vita Gelūnienė (Community artist)

Loughlinstown Estate Management

blue drum agency
advancing cultural rights, creativity and resilience in communities

With a focus on practising the art of community from within neighbourhoods, Blue Drum was established in 2002 through the Combat Poverty Agency to support communities in art and culture. Today, fostering a sense of belonging and promoting equality through community-led initiatives, Blue Drum emphasises the importance of integrating cultural expressions into imagining the future of urban landscape.

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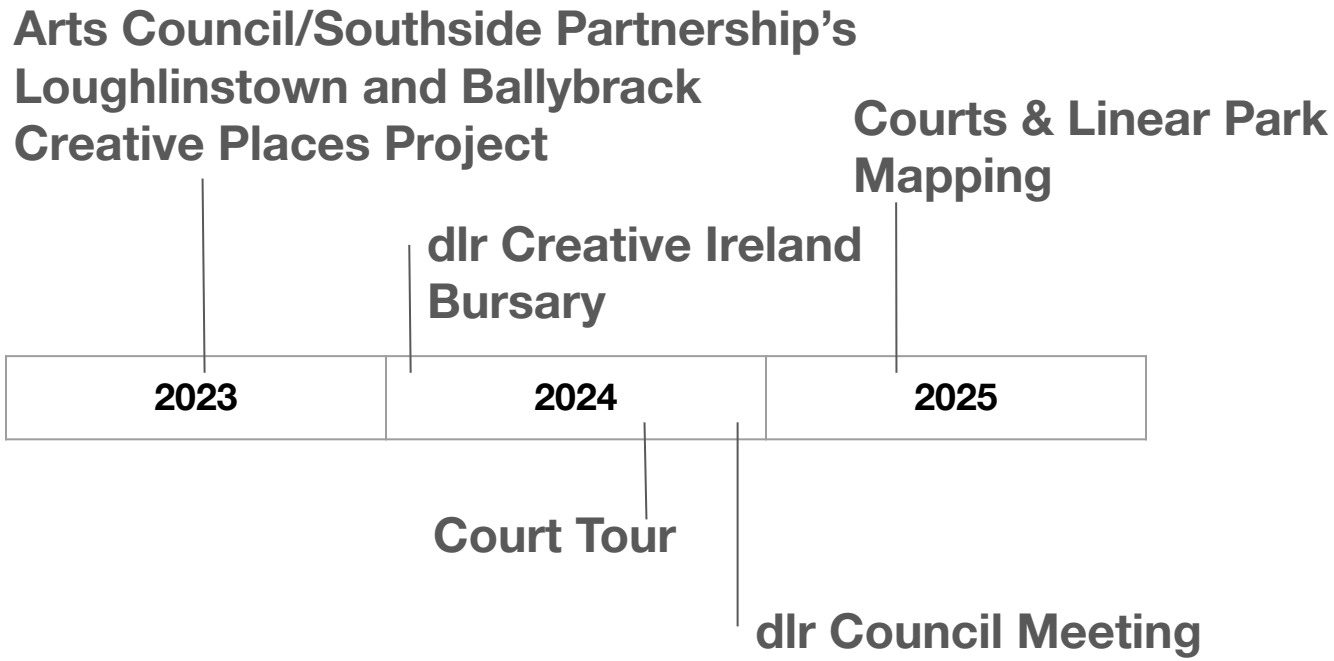
The mapping methods employed utilise the approach of the 2023 New European Bauhaus Prize winner, the 2020-2023 project 'Genius Loci: Urbanisation and Civil Community'

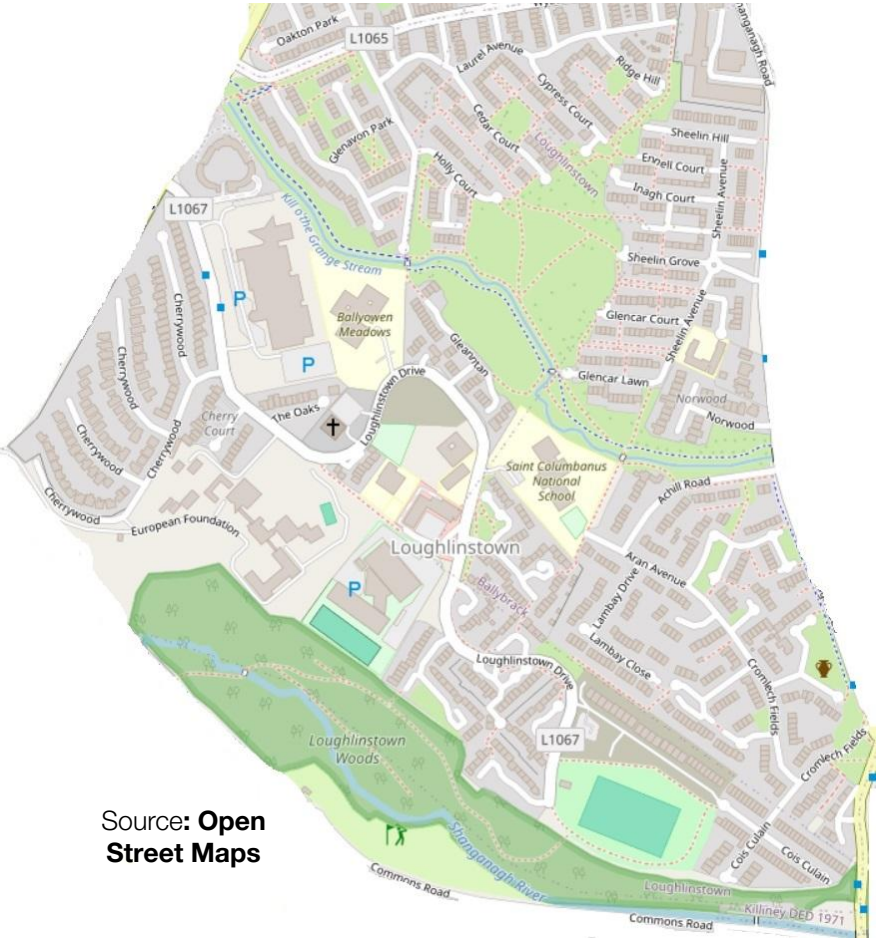
Partners:

Žemujų Šančių bendruomenė (LT)
Kaunas Technical University (LT)
Bodø Municipality (NO)
Vellenes fellesorganisasjon (NO)
Activities - Šančių bendruomenė

Background


Arts Council/Southside Partnership's Loughlinstown and Ballybrack Creative Places Project
dlr Creative Ireland Bursary
Courts & Linear Park Mapping
2023
2024
2025
Court Tour
dlr Council Meeting

Area



Source**: Open Street Maps**

Towards a Community-led Action

PLEASE JOIN-IN!

YOU KNOW YOUR COURT BEST LET'S SEE IF WE CAN IMPROVE PATHS AND GREENS

JANUARY 23 (10AM)
STARTING WITH A PATHWAY WALKABOUT TO IDENTIFY PROBLEM PLACES

FEBRUARY (11TH AND 18TH AT 6PM)
TWO WORKSHOPS FOCUSING ON: CREATING MAPS OF MEMORIES, ACTIVITIES, AND NATURE BY MARKING WHAT PEOPLE VALUE, HOW THEY USE THE SPACE, AS WELL AS NATURES WORK

MARCH 11 (10AM)
FIELD TRIP TO SEE OTHER DUBLIN COMMUNITIES' PROJECTS TO HEAR FROM OTHER GROUND-UP ACTIONS

MARCH 18 (6PM)
-CREATING *DESIGN SKETCH*

TEXT YOUR NAME, COURT AND NUMBER TO 087 2334931

Community artists Ed and Vita (Blue Drum) facilitate sessions
Coordination: Gina (Loughlinstown Estate Management)

Title: Info leaflet distributed to 200 houses at the outset. Design: Blue Drum
Title: DFEI students work placement field trip 2025. Photo: E.Carroll

Community-led

LOUGHLINSTOWN COURTS MAPPING RECAP

Last January your were invited to take part in a community mapping. Its aim was to activate residents concern for their public spaces well in advance of the 50th anniversaries. Big issues emerged like the wear and tear of footpaths, care of the green 'islands', facilities in the Park, and even the cultural heritage of this late 1970s development. Maps were produced that will help a future revisioning process:

Memory Map of people, places, and stories.

Activity Map of what happens in public space, its walkability and ease of access to public transport.

Nature Map of the natural spaces important to preserve.

Denis Murray from Sheelin, remarked "It has really helped focus and even highlight the need for more resident-led action as many of us are getting older!"

LESSONS

Pathway Condition: Wear and tear have significantly deteriorated its condition.
Community Engagement: Active involvement of residents has led to notable success stories.
Public Transport: Access to bus stops is unclear.
Nature: The registered Cypress tree at Cypress Court needs attention.
Visioning: Linear Park needs a clearer vision and to enhance its potential for the community.

PRIORITIES

1. Community Development Work: This is essential to foster the spirt of the place.
2. Detailed Planning: Developing a clear plan will facilitate getting things done well.
3. Public space: Imagination has a role in vibrant public space e.g. community art/gardening.
4. Heritage community: People are needed to plan for the 50th anniversary commemorations

Just like building strength at the gym, all of this requires collective effort. "See you at the gym," she said. "Yeah, just a few more push-ups is all it takes," he replied.

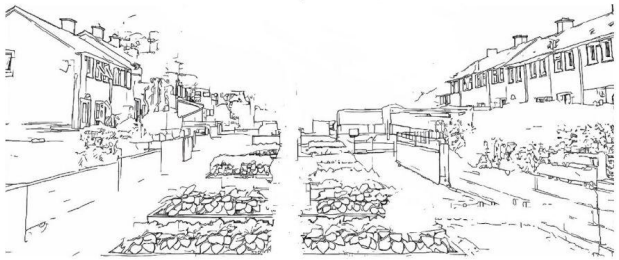
Community-led

OUR ISLAND

Workshop presented three different ideas for the ‘islands’ at the front. Tell us what you think and please rank these options in order of priority (1-3):

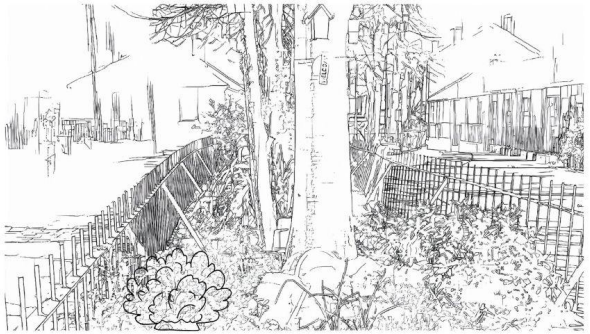
☐ **MEMORY ISLAND** is a quiet space with stones marking local people, places, and stories.

Priority: _____



☐ **ACTIVITY ISLAND** has sunlit raised beds with fruit and vegetables tended by neighbours of all ages, along with occasional pop-up spaces for activities.

Priority: __



☐ **NATURE ISLAND** is a small fenced area where children can spot birds, bees, and butterflies, featuring red rowan, holly berries, yellow gorse heather, and foxgloves.

Priority: _____

If you have a different idea for the ‘islands’ or specific features you’d like to see, please describe it here

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LOUGHLINSTOWN ESTATE MANAGEMENT

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Community-led

Loughlinstown community project reveals challenges and cultural richness

A QUIET but powerful project has taken shape in Loughlinstown over the past few months, as residents of the Courts housing estate began reimagining the place they've called home for nearly 50 years.

From January to March this year, a community arts mapping project saw locals document the wear and tear of their public spaces, uncovering both the challenges and hidden cultural richness of the 1970s estate.

The initiative was led by Blue Drum in collaboration with Loughlinstown Estate Management and is part of a wider conversation about the area's future as it approaches its 50th anniversary in 2028.

"We never saw our place in the Courts as having its own cultural heritage," said Gina Hogan, a resident of Holly Court.

"But the mapping made us look again."

Participants found stark gaps in local infrastructure—no benches, bins, or playgrounds, even in Loughlinstown Linear Park. While the project doesn't directly fix these problems, it has sparked a wave of discussion and reflection among residents.

Loughlinstown and Charlemont field visit to the Anthony Freeman O'Brien, Liberties Community Project bee-keeper 2025. PICTURE CREDIT: E. CARROLL

Local environmentalist Denis Murray said the process had a galvanising effect: "The mapping has really helped focus and even highlight the need for more resident action."

As part of the project, participants visited the Liberties Community Project and met Anthony, the beekeeper of Oliver Bond flats.

The experience showed that when residents come together with purpose, they not only improve their environment—they help rebuild a sense of connection and pride.

This grassroots approach is already making waves. Between April 7 and 14, every household in the Courts estate will receive a printed recap of the project, delivered by local volunteers. And on April 10, Blue Drum presented the project to staff at Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council.

The maps don't just chart space—they tell stories.

They highlight accessibility issues, mark places of memory, nature, and activity, and offer a glimpse of the area's potential.

All local community centres contributed to the work, and political interest is beginning to stir.

As the estate looks ahead to its 50th year, residents and organisers alike know the real work is only beginning.

"The challenge now is community building," said a Blue Drum spokesperson.

"It's the key task if the Courts are to reach their full potential."

For more information or to view the maps, contact Blue Drum at 087 2334931 or email blue.drum@yahoo.com.

Community Mapping of Public Space

(i) Memory Map Prototype

(ii) Activities Map incorporating walkability and infrastructure

(iii) Nature Map Prototype

The mapping data is gathered through field trips and workshops giving:
-a multi dimensional, non-hierarchical community perspective that is

- descriptive, not prescriptive
- open to further inputs
- can be data (empirical and qualitative data) driven.

Title: Inagh Court Island. Photo: E.Carroll

How to imagine public space that is sociable, natural and, therefore, experimental—not fixed; that is invented, not orchestrated, so as to foster experiences of publicness, not hostility?

Faranak Miraftab / Sonia Bussu

Why Memory? Because people, place and narratives recall collective memory of public housing experiences from the 1970s

Why Activities? Because what happens in the present will help to inform future gathering, connecting and belonging

Why Nature? Because enhanced care for nature is part of a collective environment formed and preserved by creativity, diversity and heritage

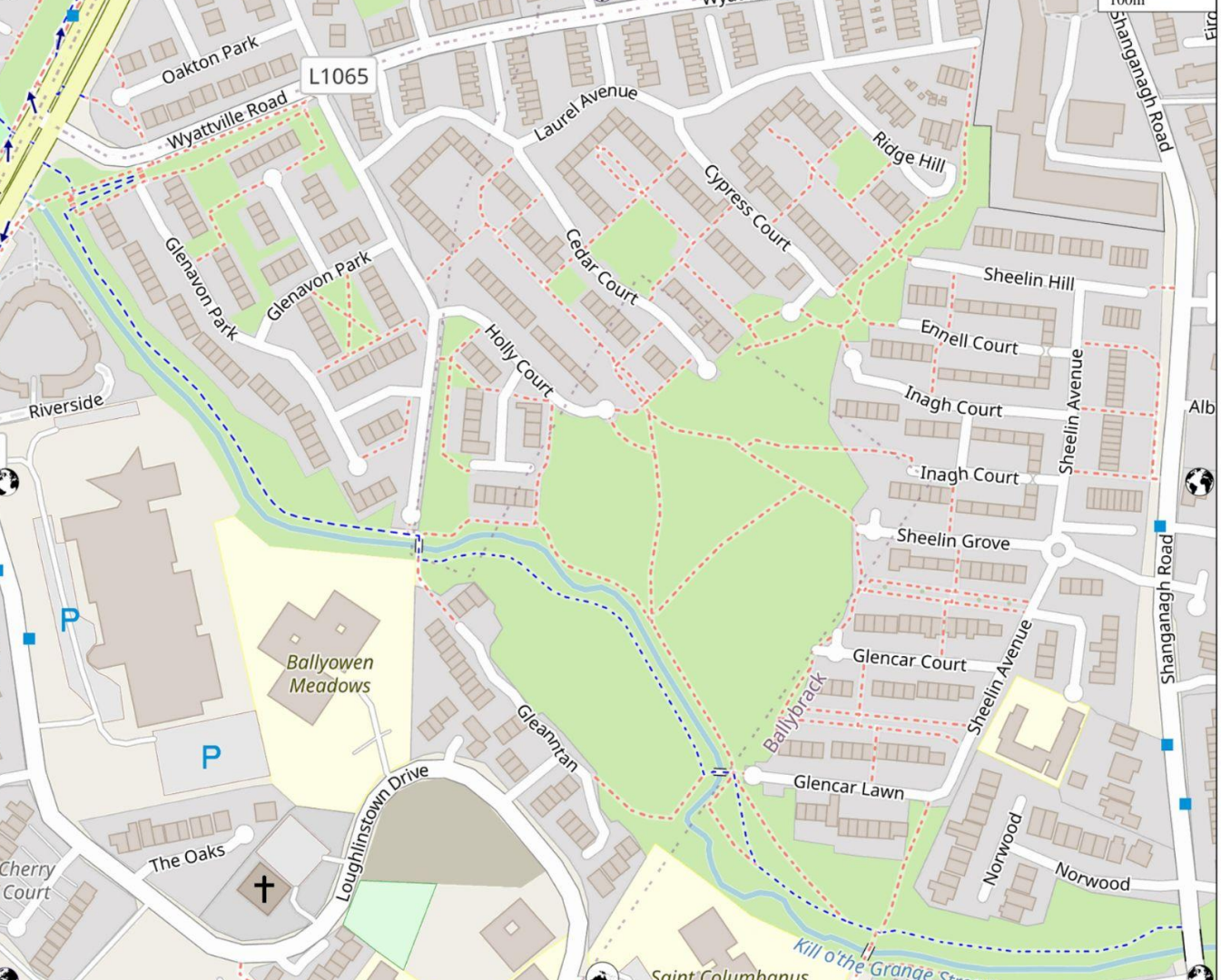
Mapping enables community to **be** subjects rather than objects and to address wear and tear on physical, social, and natural infrastructure.

Mapping (re)activates community engagement and sparks cross-departmental action within Dún Laoghaire–Rathdown County Council focused on social innovation.

Memory Map

Description: The purpose of the Memory Map prototype is to accumulate personal and collective memory values and, by sharing them with others, to create a history based on our memories, experiences, legends, family photos, etc. It is hope it can be developed as a digital platform and coordinated by dlr Women's Collective.

To fill in a story, a selection of a period is required (next slide) and when a place is chosen to enter a story a special template is then used to categorise the experience (following slide). Finally links to audio or other reference materials are also possible.



Focus on a short story of Public Housing

- 📍 Before 1970
- 📌 1980-2000
- 📍 2000-2020
- 📌 After 2020

Format for Collection

My Memory: Tell us your story, jokes, facts, etc.:

—----------

Is your story about any of the following:

☐ Event (personal, community, etc.)	☐ Small architectural element e.g. arches
☐ Collective memory	☐ Small space(s)
☐ Activity	☐ Art objects (graffiti, other)
☐ Vanished object	☐ Panorama, view, landscape
☐ Food or drink	☐ Other (name it)
☐ Street festival	
☐ Summer project	

Where did you get your memory?	Identify period:
☐ *Personal observation*	☐ Before 1970s
☐ *Heard/Read it somewhere*	☐ 1980-2000
☐ *Website*	☐ 2000-2020
☐ *Research*	☐ After 2025
☐ Other (name it)	

Mark the Location on the Map with an X and how we can name the location

- ☐ Railing
- ☐ Courtyard green
- ☐ Courtyard path
- ☐ Path
- ☐ Other (name it)
- ☐

Please tell us if you have photos, drawings or newspaper clippings about the memory.

Prepared by Ed and Vita (Blue Drum)

Title: Fealim McConville's Cedar Court workshop 2024. Photo: E.Carroll

Audio Memories Samples

Hailey Kierse

Ballybrack Climate Action

Layer: From 2020

James Perry

Local Coalman

Layer: 1980-2000

Brian Connolly

LBS Mens Shed

Layer: 2000-2020

Activity Map

The purpose of the activities map is to collect data about what the residents of the Courts do in specific places. An estate is defined by the people who live there, as they use public spaces, change them, and adapt them to their needs. Alexander Ståhle developed the sociotope map method, which allows for an objective determination of the social purposes of urban public spaces based on people's experiences.

Feedback from residents identified several layers including: Walking, Cycling, Sport, Playing, Gardening/Planting, Information boards and Public transport mobility.

Please go to:
Watch Google Earth and then
Explore Google Map

Title: Community mapping workshops. Photo: E.Carroll

Activity Map (Walkability)

Description: As part of the activity map process a dedicated walkability map was made by residents to identify issues around their street pathways and greenways. The layers are:

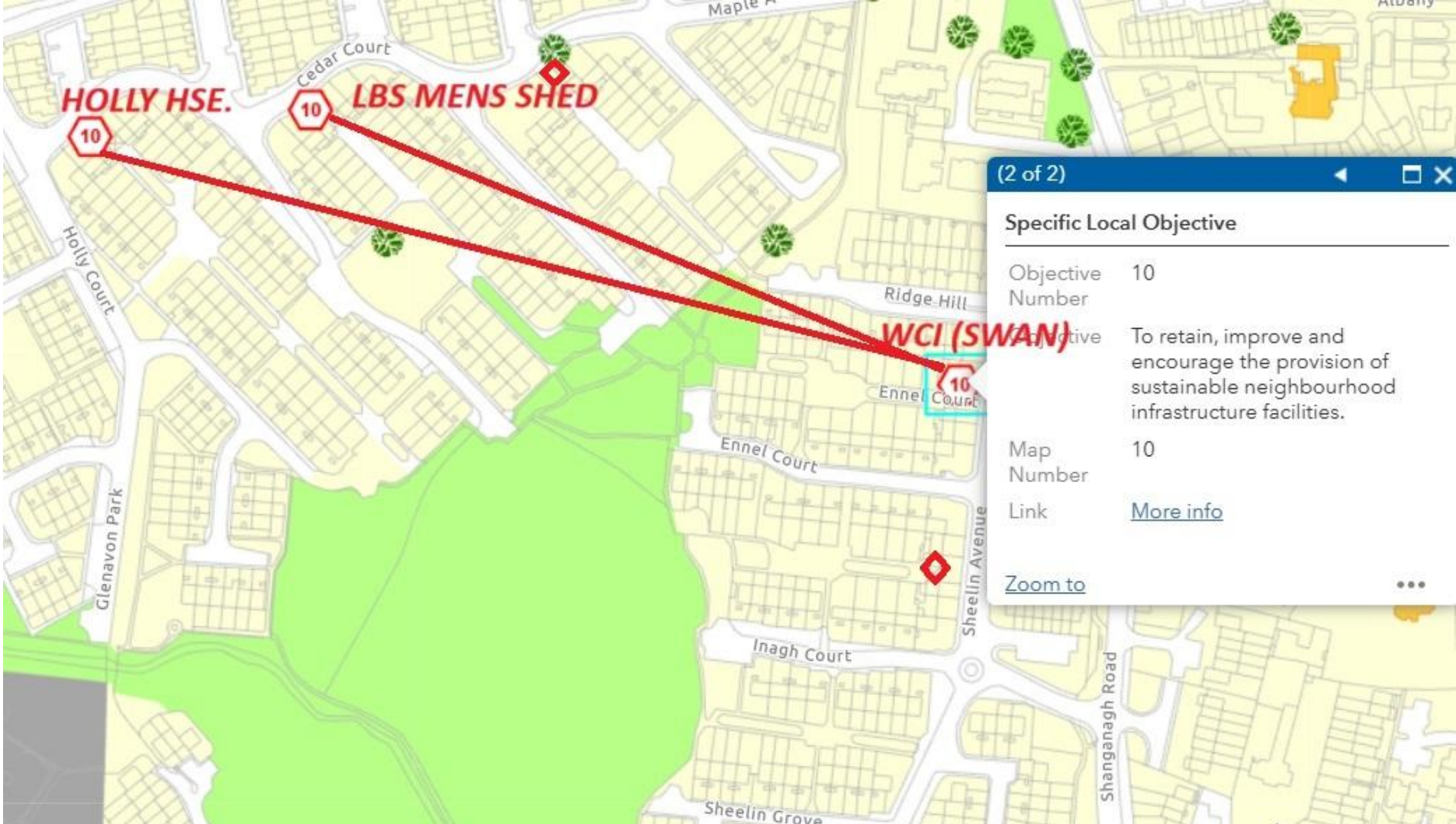
1. Hole	5. Uneven surface
2. Cracked Surface	6. Planting area
3. Moss build up	7. Illegal dumping
4. Tree root issue	8. Tree conservation

Please go to:
Watch Google Earth and then
Explore Google Map

Activity Map [Infrastructure]

Description: The purpose of mapping social infrastructure is to accumulate knowledge of places where people can gather. Each field entry has detailed knowledge about the relevant community facility. This data is derived and updated from a data bank produced by McCabe Durney Barnes (MDB) as part of a 2023 community audit commissioned by dlr Planning. It also includes an additional layer related to the distance to local public transport.

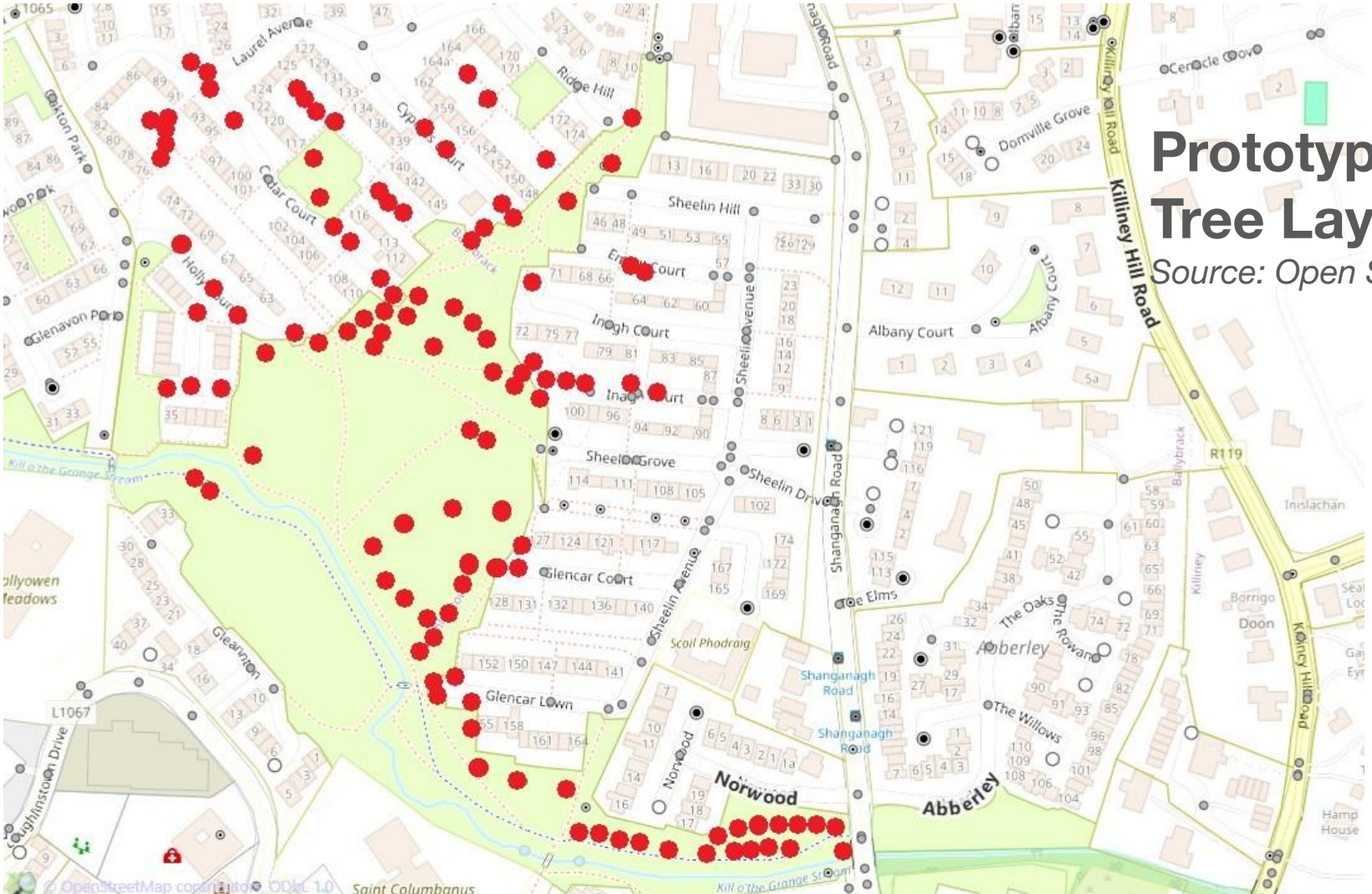
Please go to:
Watch Google Earth and then
Explore Google Map


HOLLY HSE.
LBS MENS SHED
WCI (SWAN)
10
Cedar Court
Holly Court
Glenavon Park
Ridge Hill
Ennel Court
Sheelin Avenue
Inagh Court
Shanganagh Road
Sheelin Grove
(2 of 2)
Specific Local Objective
Objective Number
10
To retain, improve and encourage the provision of sustainable neighbourhood infrastructure facilities.
Map Number
10
Link
More info
Zoom to

Nature Map

The purpose is to gather information about the nature of Loughlinstown. The collected information could show the most important corners, where you can meet rare species and habitats, but also discover important places for rest and inspiration. Attention is also given to the Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Biodiversity Action Plan Nature Recovery, Restoration & Reconnection. Specifically the map is a tool to ‘connect people and nature and inspiring a positive future (theme 4) could extend to “work with community groups to develop woodland management plans and the protection of Loughlinstown Woods (5.14). Layers could include:

1. Trees - see next slide	4. Community e.g. domestic/non domestic animals and species.
2. Shrubs / Hedgerows	5. Protected species
3. River / Ponds	6. Protected habitats.



Prototype for Tree Layer

Source: Open Street Map

Dlr Development Plan highlights the hugely impressive Cedar Court Cedar tree:
“To protect our native woodlands and to have a comprehensive management plan to conserve these important areas so they can continue to take up carbon.

Interestingly, this green space adjacent to the tree is listed as: Objective SNI: To protect, improve and encourage the provision of sustainable neighbourhood infrastructure.

Searching for Innovation

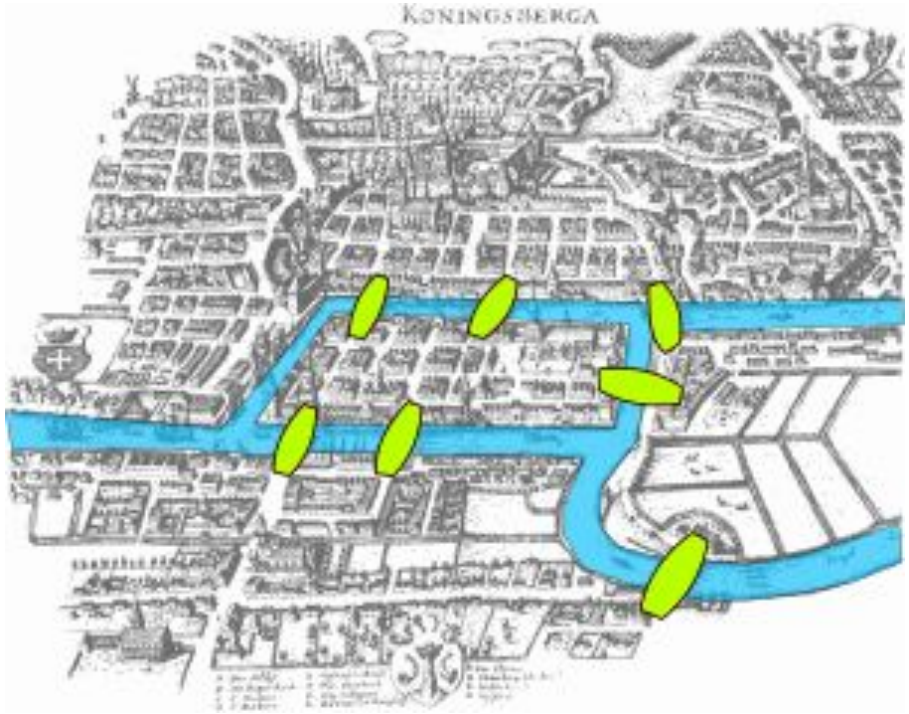


Image: Bogdan Giuşcă

Innovation lies in reinterpreting Keller Easterling's metaphor of Königsberg's bridge problem within the context of Loughlinstown. We can frame this inquiry process around how to foster interconnectedness among public and community stakeholders. This involves designing an environment where moving elements of infrastructure and community agency can seamlessly interact and flow together, creating a dynamic system that delivers real well being.

K. Easterling, 2014 p. 45.

Priorities

1. **Detailed Plan for the Area** from within dlr steering group could facilitate integrated rather than a fragmented progress.
2. **Community Development 'form and framework'** from within community is crucial for nurturing the spirit of the place - its genius loci.
3. **Ecology of landscape** with community contributes to the natural environment, biodiversity, and the ecological health of the park and islands.
4. **Public space** is helped by the imagination of community art, public art commissioning and heritage to become an experience of publicness.
5. **Heritage community's** 50th anniversary commemorations are essential and integrated into community development, landscaping, plans and public space renewal.

References

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